

# Outdoor Insights

April 2015

JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE

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## Designated Use Trails

*Improving visitor safety and experience*



Trails Talk Forums allow Jeffco Open Space to bring trail users together to learn about and discuss how trails are managed and to provide helpful feedback. Participant comments regarding designated use were a starting place to have staff assess situations that have created confusion or where existing designations could be revised.

### What is Designated Use?

Jeffco Open Space models a multiple use trail philosophy, allowing all non-motorized users to have access to the majority of trails in the Parks. With the greatest number of park visitors being on foot, the dynamic of introducing faster trail users on mountain bikes left hikers and equestrians feeling displaced and rallying for designated trails. Over several years, the following designations were implemented by Jeffco Open Space:

- |               |                        |
|---------------|------------------------|
| Hiker Only    | Hiker/Horse            |
| Bike Only     | No Dogs, Horses, Bikes |
| Alternate Use | Directional Use        |
| Multiple Use  |                        |

When staff began their investigation of the 33 trails with user designations, their goals were to

1. Improve Visitor Safety
2. Enhance Visitor Experience
3. Reduce Confusion

In some instances, staff could immediately identify ways to revise signage, reduce restrictions on some trails, and safely combine compatible uses. The following locations will see changes to existing designation or new signage being implemented on May 15, 2015.

### Centennial Cone Park

During the week, this Park provides a multiple use trail experience. On weekends, Saturdays and Sundays alternate use by odd-even dates allowing mountain biking on even dates and hiking on odd dates. Horseback riding was not restricted. Because hikers and horseback riders travel at the same relative speed, staff recommended removing horseback riding from the mountain biking odd dates to reduce speed differences by trail users and

to reduce safety concerns from both user groups. Upon implementation, horseback riding will not be allowed on even numbered weekend days when mountain biking is the designated use.

### **Deer Creek Canyon Park**

Three trails at this park provide a hiker-only experience. Because of the rate of travel being relatively the same with hikers, horses will now be allowed to use Golden Eagle, Homesteader, and Meadowlark Trail at Deer Creek Canyon Park, providing an additional 3.14 miles of trails for horseback riding.

### **Lair o' the Bear Park**

Mountain bike riders wanting to do the right thing were challenged to “legally” reach the restroom at the Park. Cyclists and horses are currently forced to ride up the entry road creating a potential safety issue. Creekside Trail that provides access to the restroom will now allow all users from the information kiosk to the restroom.

Also at Lair o' the Bear Park, Creekside Loop provided an alternative for foot traffic to the busy Bear Creek Trail. Now allowing horses and dogs on this loop, confusion and congestion will be reduced while still offering an alternative to slower-paced visitors.

### **Mount Falcon Park**

Turkey Trot Trail and its dedicated use as hiker-only provides an alternative to the multiuse Castle Trail on the east side of the Park. Staff believe horses can safely be added to this trail, due to their comparable speed with hikers.

Also at Mount Falcon Park, signage confusion at Parmalee and Tower Trails will be eliminated by designating these trails as multiple use and reducing sign clutter.

### **South Valley Park**

The Swallow Trail provides a hiker-only experience, and staff believe horses can be safely added to this trails designation.

### **NO CHANGES**

Other locations where trails have been designated where no change will occur include hiker-only trails at Crown Hill Park, Lookout Mountain Nature Preserve, Mount Galbraith Park, and North Table Mountain Park.

The bike-only Village Ride Trail at Matthews/Winters Park will remain and the Village Walk Trail retains its hiker- and horse-only designation.

Reynolds Park will remain hiker- and horse-only on the west side of Foxton Road, with trails on the east side being multiple use.

The directional use of Apex, Argos and Enchanted Forest Trails at Apex Park on odd numbered days will be retained.

### **RECAP**

33 trails evaluated, with 19 trails unchanged.

Dogs	+1
Bikes	+5
Horses	+10.5
Hikers	No Change

Issues involving trail management that require investigation and problem solving are coming before a Designated Use Trails Working Group of staff and trail users. At this time the Working Group is evaluating locations that might be test sites for a variety of tools. Information about the Working Group is provided on the Jeffco Open Space website under “Get Involved - Meetings and Agendas” Contact Dave Davenport, Outdoor Recreation Management Coordinator, at 303-271-5915 or [ddavenpo@jeffco.us](mailto:ddavenpo@jeffco.us).



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